

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 and 15-24 are pending in the application. By this Amendment, claims 9-14 have been canceled, claims 1, 2, 6-8, and 15 have been amended, and claims 20-24 have been newly added. No new matter has been entered.

As an initial matter, Applicant wishes to express sincere appreciation to the Examiner and Primary Examiner, Ms. L. Alejandro-Mulero, for the courtesy extended to Applicant's representative during the personal interview held on June 5, 2003. At the interview, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Matsumoto (Japanese Patent Application Pub. No. 11-121196), Suzuki et al. (European Patent Application Pub. No. 0880164), and Imahashi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,432,472) was discussed. In particular, Applicant's representative argued that the asserted combination of Matsumoto, Suzuki et al., and Imahashi et al. does not establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) because there is no teaching or suggestion to combine the teachings of those references. Nonetheless, the Examiner maintained her position with respect to the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection and subsequently proposed claim amendments that would apparently obviate the rejection. The proposed claim amendments are substantially reflected in the foregoing claim amendments.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2 and 9. Accordingly, Applicant has rewritten claim 2 in independent form to include all of the subject matter recited in prior independent claim 1 (i.e., prior to this Amendment) to place claim 2 in condition for allowance.

In the final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3-8, and 10-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Matsumoto in view of Suzuki et al. and

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Imahashi et al. In view of the foregoing claim amendments and the following reasons, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Although Applicant does not necessarily agree with this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as agreed during the interview, Applicant has amended each of independent claims 1 and 13 to recite that "at least one of the connecting waveguide and the proximal end portions of the antenna waveguides are configured to guide the microwaves supplied from the microwave supply source to the respective one of the antenna waveguides such that the microwaves in each of the antenna waveguides flow in the direction opposite to that of the neighboring antenna waveguide."

At least for this reason, independent claims 1 and 13 are patentably distinguishable from the cited references. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

In addition, Applicant has newly added claims 21-24 directed to an antenna for introducing microwaves in a microwave plasma processing system. Independent claim 21 includes the subject matter similar to that of allowable claims 1 and 13. For example, independent 21 recites an antenna including, among other things, "a plurality of substantially ring-shaped and substantially concentric antenna waveguides [...] comprising a proximal end portion configured to receive microwaves from a microwave supply source and configured to allow flow of the microwaves in only one radial direction [...] wherein the proximal end portions of the antenna waveguides are configured to guide the microwaves supplied from the microwave supply source to the respective one of the antenna waveguides such that the microwaves in each of the antenna waveguides flow in the direction opposite to that of the neighboring antenna

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waveguide." For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that new claim 21 and its dependent claims 22-24 should also be allowable.

Applicant respectfully requests the reconsideration of this application, the withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), and the allowance of all of pending claims 1-8 and 15-24.

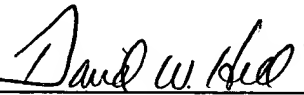
The Office Action contains a number of statements and characterizations regarding the claims and the related art. Applicant declines to subscribe automatically to any statement or characterization in the Office Action, regardless of whether it is addressed above.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: September 4, 2003

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